

****ATTENTION****

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BOWERMAN BASIN

A special and unique wetland in Grays Harbor, Washington

Bowerman Basin is a 500-acre wetland located in the northeast corner of the Grays Harbor estuary, west of Hoquiam, on the Washington coast. It is bordered on the north by State Highway 109, on the south by the Bowerman Field Airport, on the east by Paulson Road and on the west by a series of trestle pilings.

A SPECIAL PLACE

Although Bowerman Basin occupies only two percent of the intertidal habitat of Grays Harbor, it is one of the most critical stops for migratory shorebirds to store up fat reserves for their long journeys twice a year. Spring heralds the passage of great numbers of the northward-bound shorebirds on their way from Central and South America to breeding grounds in the Arctic and sub-Arctic. During late summer and early fall, south-bound birds return through Grays Harbor and Bowerman Basin in smaller numbers as they disperse over North America.

A combination of features makes the area attractive to the shorebirds and essential to the overall success of their migrations: a higher elevation to allow the birds extra feeding time between tides, an abundance of tiny, shrimp-like organisms for food and protection from storms.

WATCHING SPRING SHOREBIRDS

Especially in the spring, the great numbers of shorebirds in the area is a spectacular sight! Watch them as they feed and fly, constantly, gracefully moving.

The spring shorebirds begin showing up in April, peaking near the end of the month and leaving in mid-May.

Map: To find Bowerman Basin, drive 1/2 mile west of Hoquiam to Paulson Road and turn left. Turn right on Airport Way. Look for Bowerman Basin signs and for parking on both sides of the road.

About two dozen species of shorebirds use the Grays Harbor estuary at this time. The five most abundant species are western sandpiper, dunlin, short-billed and long-billed dowitcher and red knot. Western sandpipers comprise 85 to 90 percent of the shorebirds present. Some shorebirds are present throughout the year; in winter, there is a substantial dunlin population.

During the full high tide, the shorebirds concentrate along the northwest tip of the Bowerman peninsula. As the tide begins to recede and the mudflats are exposed, the shorebirds erupt into flight to spread out over the basin to feed. This activity is observable from the parking areas. Sightseers with rubber boots can walk out to the northwest tip on a marshy "trail" along the northernmost edge of the peninsula.

OTHER WILDLIFE

The peregrine falcon, northern harrier and red-tailed hawk are among the birds of prey seen at the basin. A variety of waterfowl, perching birds, gulls, terns, black-tailed deer and small mammals are also there. Anadromous fish (salmon and steelhead), flatfish,

crabs, clams, shrimp and oysters thrive in the estuarine areas in and around the area.

PLANTS AND TREES

Vegetation in the area includes red alder, black willow, Scouler's willow, western crabapple, wild blackberry, salmonberry, Scot's broom, cattail, American bullrush, a variety of sedges and, along the tideflats, pickleweed.

YEAR-ROUND RECREATION

Birdwatchers, hikers, duck hunters, fishermen, scientists, artists and photographers can all enjoy Bowerman Basin's wetland habitat and its rich diversity of wildlife all through the year.

REMEMBER

Keep a respectful distance from the shorebirds to avoid disturbing them.

Keep to the "trail;" do not wander on to the airstrip or trample the marsh.

Do not park vehicles beyond the gravel strip parking areas.

Use only the bathroom facilities at the large blue and white airport waiting room building — not

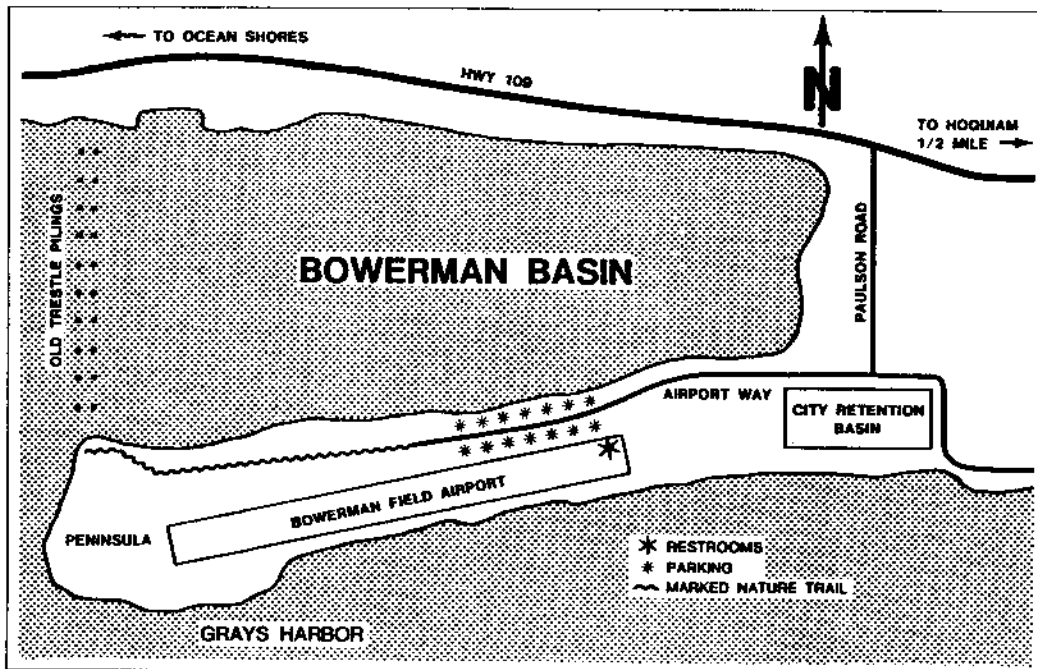
at the cafe.

Come prepared! Bring rain gear, rubber boots, tide tables, binoculars, spotting scope and camera.

Support conservation efforts directed at the preservation of wetlands like Bowerman Basin.

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Produced by the Department of Wildlife in cooperation with the friends of Bowerman Basin.



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